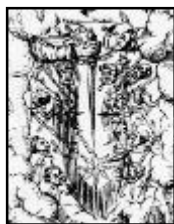

SUFOI News 1999

SUFOI Newsletter No. 17

Excerpts from the Danish Magazine "UFO-Nyt"





Front cover:

Old engraving of a comet which, like a "sword of flame", appeared in the sky in 1528.

See page 20.

Drawing: SUFOI Picture

Library



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Scandinavian UFO Information

Excerpts from the Danish Magazine UFO-NYT

SUFOI NEWS is sent free of charge to everyone who exchanges magazines with SUFOI.

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Printing: Micro-Forma, Odense, Denmark

Address all editorial correspondence to:

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Postbox 6

DK-2820 Gentofte

Denmark

Published 1999

Copyright 1999 by SUFOI

UFO-Nyt is published by Scandinavian UFO Information (SUFOI)

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<http://www.sufoi.dk> and www.ufo.dk

SUFOI NEWS ○ SUFOI Newsletter is published irregularly by
Scandinavian UFO Information (SUFOI) ○ Postbox 6 ○ DK-2820 Gentofte ○ Denmark
ISSN 0904-2598

New Vision for SUFOI

1997 is not just the year that SUFOI celebrates its 40th birthday – it is also the year that we present a totally new vision for the organisation.

From time to time it is necessary to review of one's work. What do we want, and where are we going in the future? Such a discussion was carried out by SUFOI over the past year and resulted in a new set of goals for the organisation.

The vision consists of four points. The first and most important is fully in line with our present work: we shall work seriously to find out what it is people see in the sky, whether or not this involves unknown phenomena. At the same time we shall not make things seem more mysterious than they are. We shall keep our feet on the ground and not propose wild, speculative theories for which there is no evidence. This is formulated as:

SUFOI aims to identify and demystify all observed aerial phenomena.

It is obviously to everyone's advantage if everybody is familiar with aerial phenomena. The city lights have gradually become so dominant that more and more people are becoming estranged from the natural phenomena that are found in the sky. At the same time,

new phenomena such as lasers are appearing. SUFOI therefore sees it as a goal to provide information about these known phenomena, so that the general public becomes familiar with them.

This task is a totally new element of SUFOI's work, and is also a part of the above-mentioned demystification of aerial phenomena.

SUFOI aims to engender familiarity with the sky so that everyone is able to recognise all known phenomena.

At the same time SUFOI will continue to process and investigate reports of unknown aerial phenomena. In order for us to have the best possible basis for this work it is important that as many sightings as possible come to our attention. Therefore:

SUFOI aims to ensure that all observers of unknown aerial phenomena report their sightings to SUFOI.

As SUFOI wants to promote a serious, investigative attitude towards UFOs it is important for us to be heard on questions concerning

these phenomena. Therefore the fourth and final part of our vision is that anyone looking for information about UFOs should refer to SUFOI:

SUFOI aims to be the organisation that people contact to obtain information about UFOs.

These four points constitute SUFOI's new vision, upon which there is broad agreement in SUFOI's leadership. Parts of the vision are fully in line with our work up until now, while others are new or changed. In particular the vision marks a break with the main question of former times: Are UFOs spacecraft or not? This is obviously still one of the questions, but the general focus has changed to dealing with people's experiences of the sky in general – and especially to demystify as many phenomena as possible. It is also important to note that the term 'UFO' does not appear in the wording of the new vision.

With this fresh view of our mission, we are now ready to put 40 years of work behind us and continue into the future with renewed vigour.

By Per Andersen



Danish sightings in the second half of 1996

By Toke
Haunstrup



This time our half-yearly summary covers the seven months from June to December 1996. We have chosen to include June in the second half of 1996 so that future summaries will correspond to the calendar year.

The statistics show that SUFOI registered 181 reports in the period from June to December 1996. This corresponds to an average of 26 reports a month. In comparison, in the six months from December 1995 to May 1996 SUFOI received 97 reports, corresponding to a monthly average of 16 reports. There has therefore been a marked increase in the number of sighting reports. At least two factors seem to have contributed to this increase:

- The use of searchlights has led to especially many reports. Of the 181 registered reports from the second half of 1996, at least 55 of the cases involve lasers or searchlights, corresponding to around 30%.
- The autumn and winter showed an increase in media interest in UFOs, helped in part by the premiere of the film *»Independence Day«*.

A closer look at the 181 reports we received between June and December shows that twelve of these concerned sightings made before June 1996. We could immediately explain 73 of the

cases as known phenomena, corresponding to a clear-up rate of around 40%. This comprises a fall of 10% compared to the previous six months. This fall should not however be interpreted as resulting from a higher percentage of UFO sightings, but rather a consequence of a lack of resources. The increased number of reports makes it difficult for us to invest the time necessary for investigating each case.

Furthermore, it should be pointed out that far from all the cases have yet been fully processed, which is why the final clear-up percentage will very possibly be much higher.

New video footage

Throughout 1996, SUFOI registered a significant rise in the number of video recordings of aerial phenomena. A rarity just 5 – 10 years ago, today we frequently receive reports of video recordings. This development is obviously related to the growing ownership and use of video cameras.

As is the case with the visual sightings, there is

usually an explanation for the phenomenon recorded. Typical explanations are aircraft lights and bright stars or planets.

Recordings of lights in the dark night sky often suffer from the problem of over-focusing. This results from the use of auto-focus, which has difficulty in maintaining a sharp image of a light. The effect of over-focusing is that a star, for example, instead of being sharply defined, appears as a large, murky blob of light. These blobs are often misinterpreted to be the phenomenon's *actual* appearance, leaving the cameraman wondering what sort of strange object he or she has recorded.

Around 20:00 on 19 December 1996 a married couple were outside by their house. They both noticed a stationary light in the dark sky. With the naked eye, it was not possible to see any other details, but through a pair of binoculars the wife could see some red and blue blinking lights associated with the phenomenon.

The husband fetched the couple's video camera and recorded the phenomenon

for about one minute. The phenomenon appears on the video as a large shining disc. Within the disc can be seen the outlines of rings of light of various intensity, while the disc itself seems to “pulse”. After three to four minutes’ observation, it seemed to the couple that the object flew directly away from them, and it disappeared from view.

The husband contacted SUFOI’s Alert Centre, and the couple were sent a report form and photograph report, which they returned a few days later together with a copy of the video tape.

Having watched the recording several times, our immediate assessment is that during the recording the camera was very out of focus (defocused). This explains why the phenomenon appears on the video as a large, shining disc. The rings in the disc may be caused by reflections and refraction in the lens of the camera. The phenomenon – as described by the witnesses – is in several aspects reminiscent of the landing lights on a distant aircraft. One possibility, therefore, is that the couple were looking at the searchlights of an aircraft a long distance away (roughly 50 – 100 km). If the aircraft had followed a course almost directly towards the witnesses, it would have appeared to them to be stationary. After three to four minutes’ observation, the aircraft could have altered course (for example, turning in preparation for landing at Kastrup or Værløse), at which the directional searchlights would be turn-

ed away from the witnesses, thereby disappearing “out of sight”.

A conclusion to this case, meanwhile, must wait until we have carried out test recordings with the camera concerned.

Mysterious light

The following case is somewhat atypical of the reports we normally receive. It concerns a young woman, who on the night of Monday 19 August 1996 observed a light phenomenon in her bedroom.

The witness had been in town together with her husband and child on Sunday 18 August, coming home late in the evening to their home in Stenløse. When the couple had put the child to bed, the husband went out into the garage to play on his computer, while the wife went to bed as well.

Around 01:20 Danish Summer Time, the woman heard a loud whistling from the garden, which lies outside the bedroom. At the same time, she noticed a spot of light on a cupboard in the room. The spot seemed “strange”, in that it was made up of a mass of shiny dots. The spot was about the size of a tennis ball.

After watching the spot of light for about two minutes, the woman went towards the cupboard and stood in front of it, despite which the spot remained.

She then looked out of the window and saw two lights in the sky: a red light above a white. The lights were positioned in a south-south-

westerly direction at a height of 10 – 15 degrees above the horizon. After she had been watching the lights for about two minutes, they suddenly travelled upward at high speed, disappearing within a couple of seconds. At the same time, the witness saw a condensation trail in the sky behind the lights. Unfortunately, she did not notice how or when the spot of light on the cupboard disappeared.

When the phenomenon had disappeared, the woman went down to her husband, who had not seen anything. In the report, the woman says that their child woke up, and that the family cat came in from the garden with its fur raised and signs of nervousness or fear. The sighting affected her so much, that her husband had to keep watch for the rest of the night. Nothing further occurred, however.

SUFOI’s investigator Poul Holm Andreasen visited the witness and interviewed her about the events. The witness appeared, in Poul’s opinion, somewhat uneasy about the incident but nonetheless trustworthy. Poul can find no explanation for the case.

A case of this type is especially difficult to deal with – not least because it is so unusual. The light on the bedroom cupboard is certainly the strangest part of the incident: was it caused by a real, physical phenomenon? An after-image on the woman’s retina? Or did she overlook a source of light, in the room for example, which was causing the spot? This is difficult to determine.

Danish reports

A final, possible explanation could be a type of “fantasy experience”, perhaps taking place in the grey area between consciousness and sleep. Unfortunately, the mechanism behind fantasy experiences is poorly understood, so it is not possible come any further toward an explanation of this incident. As far as the lights in the sky are concerned, it is also difficult to find a satisfactory explanation that fits with the lights’ patterns of movement.

If readers have any proposals for an explanation for this interesting case, or ideas on how it could be tackled, they are very welcome to contact the author.

Aircraft startles married couple

This report is an example of the importance of carrying out a thorough investigation, if one wishes to determine whether there may be a natural explanation for a sighting.

The witnesses are a married couple who live on a farm near Kokborg, between Thyregod and Brande. In the report, 38-year-old Kirsten describes how, on Saturday 21 September 1996, around 21:30 DST, she was sitting watching television: *“I noticed a blue light out in the yard. I looked out of the window and saw above the stable roof a whatsit with...four lights. It was big, around 15 metres long and 10 metres wide.”*

In the report, Kirsten draws the phenomenon as a rectangular object with four lights – one in each corner – coloured green, blue, white

and red. She continues her report:

*“It was moving from west to east **very** slowly. I felt a whirring monotonous vibration.”*

Kirsten alerted her husband, Kim, to the phenomenon. In the report, Kim describes the subsequent sequence of events:

*“I get up, look out of the window and see a very big ‘machine’, with large, constantly lit searchlights, ‘gliding’ over the yard at a height of about 10 – 15 metres. At the same time, I perceive a **very powerful** energy – not exactly noise, more level, whirring vibrations. I move nearer to the window. It [the object] has now passed over the yard, and goes more or less straight up in the air as it glides over some high trees (about 20 metres high).*

“I now see it from behind, as it lifts itself above the trees and disappears just as suddenly as it came into view. When looking at it from behind, I see its silhouette marked by the lights. It reminded (sic) me of driving behind a large truck at night – a rectangular shape with a clearly defined triangle inside.”

At first, this sounds like a very strange and dramatic incident!

Regarding the witnesses’ report, it should be stressed that it is *not* possible to judge distances and sizes during observations in darkness. This is documented by research, so we cannot rely on the couple’s assessments of the phenomenon’s size and height over the ground.

The couple contacted SUFOI’s Alert Centre and the

case was forwarded to SUFOI’s local investigator Egon Olsen, who interviewed the witnesses.

Because of the high strangeness of the case, he contacted the local newspaper *Vejle Amts Folkeblad* to appeal for witnesses. The *Folkeblad* reported the case on 4 October, which led to an approach from a local home guard. He was able to point out that on the same evening, there had been a military exercise involving parachute jumps.

During the exercise, the military had used a Hercules transport plane, which had been flying at a very low height. The home guard thought that the shining triangle at the back of the phenomenon could have been caused by light streaming out from the open hatch in the Hercules. The other lights were the plane’s ordinary navigation lights.

This theory sounds reasonable, and it also explains the very powerful sound associated with the phenomenon; a Hercules plane travelling at a height of a few hundred metres is certainly very noisy.

Lights in triangular formation

On the morning of Friday 20 December 1996, a woman living in Frederiksværk was getting her car ready to drive to work. At 06:20 Danish Normal Time she noticed 10 grey-white lights that were moving in a triangular formation.

There were six lights in one of the triangle’s “legs” and four in the other. After

six to eight seconds, the phenomenon disappeared over the horizon towards Frederiksværk, to the west. The lights had been so high up that the witness had had to tilt her head back a little to watch them.

Each light resembled a black triangle with a smaller, grey triangle in the centre. The hindmost light in the formation seemed to "sway" from side to side. No sound was heard.

Birds in flight, illuminated by the lights of the town, would be an obvious explanation for this phenomenon. However, the case has not been investigated sufficiently to come to a definite conclusion.

Triangular phenomenon over Jyderup

On the same day as the sighting in Frederiksværk, Friday 20 December 1996, a heating engineer was working on the roof of Curt Frandsen's residence in Jyderup. Curt was talking to the engineer, when he turned and caught sight of a triangular, "shiny as gold" phenomenon, that seemed to be moving towards Slagelse to the south.

The triangular phenomenon, which was pointing downwards, had a triangular hole in the centre. After about one or two minutes it was only visible as a red, pulsating sphere on the ho-

rizon, before finally disappearing out of sight behind some trees.

The phenomenon had a distinct outline, and its surface shimmered, as when warm air rises in front of a flat surface. Unfortunately, the heating engineer did not manage to catch sight of the silent phenomenon. The time of the sighting was between 15:00 and 16:00 DNT.

The case was reported in the local newspaper »Kalundborg Folkeblad« on 3 January 1997. The report led to calls to the paper about other observations, but none of these had any direct connection with Curt Frandsen's sighting.

Did a Meteor Fall on Greenland?

"It was like watching a jumbo jet fall to the ground," said three employees from the local authority in Nuuk on Greenland about the natural phenomenon they witnessed Friday 29 November 1996. Citing the Greenland newspaper »Atuagagliutit« as their source, Reuters reported the event in the Danish daily press on 4 December 1996.

According to the information given by the three local

authority employees, they suddenly saw a gigantic multicoloured flash of light in the sky. They followed the course of its flight very carefully across the sky. Other eyewitnesses saw the impact, which was thought to be somewhere around Buksefjorden south of Nuuk.

The Greenland authorities were considering putting out a reward to get people in the area to intensify the search for the supposed meteorite.

The day after the observation, employees from Greenland's Raw Materials Bureau flew in by helicopter to look for the meteorite. They had no luck finding it.

Even in broad daylight it can be hard to estimate dis-

tance and usually it is necessary to have several independent and accurate sightings to point out the exact location of a meteorite impact.

Despite every effort, no meteorite has so far been found on Greenland.

At the moment, all we can do is admire the 15-ton iron meteorite "Agpalilik", on display at the Geological Museum in Copenhagen. This meteorite was found on 31 July 1963 after an intensive search by one of the leading experts in iron meteorites, university-trained engineer Vagn F. Buchwald of the Danish Technical University.



Photograph:
Kim Møller
Hansen

Close encounter of the third kind on Funen

By Erling Hegelund and Toke Haunstrup



“... A bright yellow light phenomenon floated in the air between the road and the woods... it was three metres high and circle-shaped...”

In the early eighties a young man saw triangular entities in the village of Åsum on Funen. The man, who lives in north Odense, wishes to remain anonymous, so we shall refer to him with the initials PN.

PN states that in the autumn of 1981 or 1982 he observed a shining phenomenon together with several entities.

SUFOI first became aware of the sighting in the spring of 1996, when Erling Hegelund interviewed PN's mother about some experiences she had been having since 1980 (discussed in UFO-Nyt 1/96). During this interview the mother remarked on PN's sighting.

Triangular entities

Early one morning in the autumn of 1981 or 1982, PN was on his way to work at a warehouse in Odense where he was due to turn up at 02:30. Around 02:10 he was driving his Fiat 125 through the village of Åsum, about 4 km east of Odense. PN cannot remember the exact time, but he knows that it usually takes about 20 minutes to drive from Åsum to his workplace.

Åsum is a small village with a few scattered houses. The village is situated around a small beech copse, which is enclosed by three roads. The copse is 150 metres long on each side.

The witness drove along Snedkerstræde (Joiner Street), which runs straight past the copse. Snedkerstræde goes up over a small rise and then leads directly onto a larger road, Åsum Bygade (Åsum High Street). At this T-junction PN usually turned left to drive towards Odense. At the time of the sighting there were still leaves on the trees, so he could not see through the copse from Snedkerstræde.

Just as PN reached the low rise on Snedkerstræde (directly before the T-junction), the car suddenly stalled. As the road here slopes down towards Åsum Bygade, the car carried on rolling forwards.

When PN reached the T-junction he stopped the car, at the same time catching sight of a strange phenomenon.

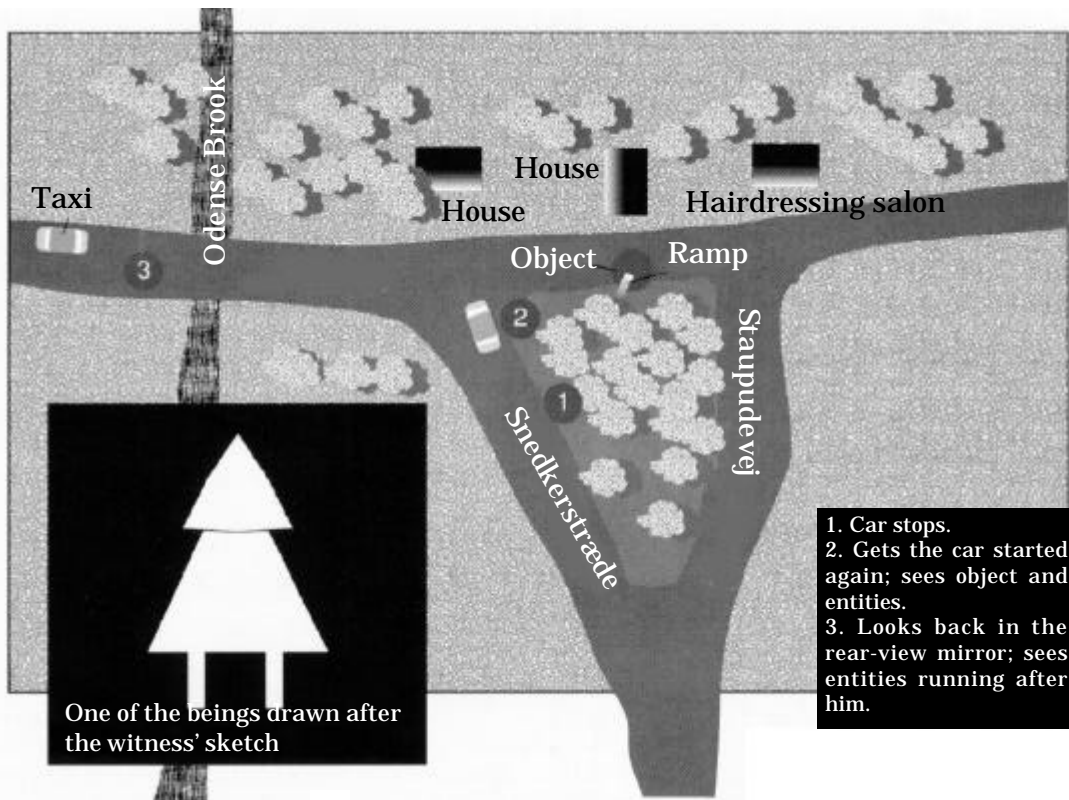
About 60 metres away on the right-hand side of Åsum Bygade a glowing object was floating, partly above the road and partly out over the

copse. The phenomenon - thought to have been floating about 1-2 metres above the ground - was about 3m high and “circle-shaped”. PN found it very difficult to make out the object's shape, as it was emitting a bright light that illuminated the area with a yellowish colour.

There appeared to be a “ramp” leading down from the object into the copse, which lies a couple of metres below road level. The ramp was the same width as the object. At the point where the ramp was “connected” to the glowing object there seemed to be a large opening into the “interior”. PN had difficulty seeing any details, as the “interior” was like an “orange cloud”.

As well as the phenomenon, PN saw two groups of entities. The first group comprised seven small entities that were “running” up and down the ramp. Their movements were so fast and continuous that they reminded PN of something mechanical. He had the impression that the creatures were gathering something from the copse and giving it to “someone” inside the cabin.

*Illustration:
Henrik
Klinge
Pedersen*



In addition to these small entities PN saw another group consisting of three somewhat larger individuals. Two of these were standing at the top of the ramp (by the "entrance"), while the other was standing down at the foot. They were each holding an instrument of some sort. PN perceived the latter group to be "guards". They stood still throughout the entire sighting.

The entities were about one metre tall and had a light grey appearance. They resembled two triangles placed on top of each other. A small triangle at the top formed the head, with a larger one underneath that corresponded to the body. The “guards” were a little taller than the other entities.

PN does not remember seeing arms on the entities. Their legs were just small “stumps” sticking downwards. The entities floated over the ground, while the “leg stumps” did not move.

After the shocked PN had been watching the entities for about a minute, he glanced in the opposite direction along Åsum Bygade and caught sight of a taxi standing 150 metres from the copse down towards the valley at Åsum. The taxi driver flashed his lights several times. PN is not sure whether it was meant as a signal to him or to the entities.

At this point PN managed to start his car. At the same time it appeared that the entities had noticed him and they began to move towards him at great speed. Immediately after this the taxi turned round and drove off back towards Odense.

The witness now became frightened and turned left, driving as fast as he could along Åsum Bygade (away from the phenomenon and towards Odense) and down through the valley. When he was up over the valley he

looked in the rear-view mirror and saw that the entities had now got as far as the bottom of the valley and were out in the middle of the bridge over the brook. PN was now about 150 metres away from the T-junction, and the entities had travelled 140 metres (from the location of the phenomenon and down to the à). The road turns at this point, so PN lost sight of the entities.

PN remembers that he got to work earlier than normal, as he drove very fast through Odense.

The same day after work PN went back to Åsum and looked at the area over which the phenomenon had been floating. He found no trace of anything, either on the road or in the woods.

Further investigation

As SUFOI first heard about the case in 1996, the chances of finding any witnesses

Danish reports

were extremely small. However we tried to find the taxi driver mentioned through an announcement in the local newspaper »*Fyens Stiftstidende*« - without success.

The report was investigated by Erling Hegelund and Toke Haunstrup, who went out to look at the location of the sighting. We took the opportunity to ring the doorbells of a number of residents in the area. None of the residents could tell us anything; several of them had not even been living in Åsum at the beginning of the Eighties.

As was noted at the beginning of this article, we found out about PN's sighting through his mother. Between one and two years before PN's sighting she and her husband had an experience where their car had stalled and they had seen a light in the sky. As the father was worried that the family would be made a laughing stock, he had forbidden anyone to say anything about his and his wife's experience. When PN later had his own experience he had not dared to tell anyone other than his own family.

The witness

PN was 21 or 22 years old at the time of the sighting. During the investigation he stated that the experience has since affected him in several ways. He has been affected psychologically, and he feels that he has acquired several extraordinary abilities. For example, he believes that he has acquired the ability to foresee events.

In addition he says that he has been generally unlucky since the experience and has had several serious traffic accidents. In what way PN believes these accidents to have any connection with his experience he has not explained. Neither before nor after the experience has PN had any particular interest in UFOs.

There is no doubt that PN believes that he was observing intelligent alien entities. Equally he believes in his parents' experience of their car stalling in 1980.

A psychological explanation?

A rhetorical question: Can we trust the report of a witness?

Our meeting with PN painted a picture of a person who was not consciously in any way trying to pull the wool over our eyes. Having met PN we are certain that he has actually had an experience, which he is convinced is due to something "from out there".

In the meantime there is something more interesting to consider, which is how far the events PN describes have a 'physical' origin. In other words, did the incident actually happen, or is the explanation more likely to be that PN had an experience of a psychological nature, where it was PN's own 'fantasy images' and his preconceptions of UFOs that induced an experience?

The following is an attempt to present some features of PN's personality and his description of the incident that could point to a

psychological explanation for the experience:

Since his sighting PN has had psychical experiences of different types (he states amongst other things that he has the ability to foresee events). This could be a natural result of the psychological after-effects that an extraordinary experience can bring about. However it can also be seen as a result of the fact that PN generally has a great many "extraordinary" experiences (of a psychical nature). If therefore he is "receptive" to this type of experience, this could also explain the incident in Åsum. It is worth noting that one or two years before PN's own experience his parents had been involved in an incident where their car stalled and they observed a light in the sky. PN could have been influenced by his parents' report to a greater or lesser extent. Regarding the parents' sighting it should also be noted that it did not have an unusually high degree of strangeness. For example, the parents' report does not contain any real indication that the car's stopping was directly related to the light that was seen. At several points the description of the light phenomenon is actually reminiscent of aircraft lights. It should be borne in mind that this sighting is more than 15 years old. It is difficult to recall events precisely after such a long period. Another factor is so-called 'memory displacement' (see »Was the UFO round or rectangular?« in UFO-Nyt 1/94), where PN could have connected an 'unrelated' memory (for exam-

ple, from a science fiction film) to his own experience.

Finally it is interesting that PN personifies the entities as "guards" and "workers". Here PN has interpreted the entities' behaviour, functions and relationships (workers carry out the manual duties, workers are subordinate to guards, and so on).

It is quite natural for us to interpret (and find meaning in) the things we experience. However from perception psychology (the scientific discipline that analyses people's

ability to understand and interpret sense impressions) we know that this interpretation has a feedback effect on the observer's memory of the incident experienced. This means that PN's interpretation of the entities as workers and guards could over time influence his memory of the event in correspondence with this interpretation. For example, the interpretation can lead afterwards to PN only remembering the details about the "guards" that confirm this interpretation of the

entities, while any other details are forgotten.

Conclusion

This situation is reminiscent of ones we have so often been in before; we have a case of especially high strangeness, but only one witness. The main point is obviously how far PN's description is in accordance with a 'real' (physical) experience. But as so often before, it is impossible to come to a satisfactory conclusion about this.

SUFOI - the world's most well known UFO organisation!

The above headline could well indicate delusions of grandeur brought on by the summer heat. But it's not all hot air! SUFOI has carried out a survey of the Danish people's knowledge of the organisation and what we do (as well as a number of other questions). It turns out that around every third Dane has heard of us - a figure that totally exceeded our expectations.

The survey questioned a large number of randomly selected Danes on their knowledge of UFOs, SUFOI, recognised aerial phenomena and so on. A number of results were disappointing, for example people's knowledge of recognised aerial phenomena. Other results were surprising. We are especially pleased that so many are familiar with SUFOI - 31% of those interviewed said that they knew of the organisation.

At the same time, it is clear that their knowledge of SUFOI corresponds very well to our activities and the coverage SUFOI often gets in the media. According to the "average Dane", the organisation's activities are primarily investigations and the publication of a magazine. After this come members' meetings, research

and conferences. This picture is actually very accurate.

These findings do not take us completely by surprise. We have had continued contact with the Danish media over several years - we recently celebrated our 40th anniversary - and from time to time have received additional coverage through the wide range of media in Denmark.

This was best illustrated by SUFOI's open meeting in the Vanløse community centre on 27 May 1997. On that occasion, SUFOI set a new media record with items on both TV2 News and DR TV News on the same evening. Well over 1 million viewers saw these two items alone!

In addition to this, there was an item on the radio station DR P3 the same morning and subsequent coverage in

Politiken, Berlingske Tidende and other media. In the same week, SUFOI took part in no less than four TV programmes, two radio programmes and innumerable articles in the printed media!

In other words, it is through conscious effort that SUFOI is achieving its goal: to be recognised by the public as Denmark's serious UFO organisation.

With an awareness level of 31%, SUFOI is already way ahead of most UFO organisations in the world. I dare say that none of the other UFO organisations in the world is as well known in its homeland as SUFOI is in Denmark.

That doesn't mean that we are going to rest on our laurels - we also want to be recognised by the other 69% of the population!

By Per Andersen



Object filmed in Albertslund

By Toke
Haunstrup



On Monday 8 July 1996, a 23-year-old radio engineer from Albertslund, near Copenhagen, filmed a strange phenomenon in the sky.

The sighting

The radio engineer, who lives with his parents in the "Elephant's Quarter" south of Roskildevej, saw the phenomenon with his mother. She was cooking when she looked out of the window and saw the oblong/oval object. It was around 15:45 DST. The mother called out to the son, who fetched his Sony video camera. From the terrace, he filmed the object for a couple of minutes, while his mother stood in the doorway and watched.

At first, the object was about 15 degrees north-east above the horizon, relatively low in the sky. After a while the object started to rotate around itself. After about 5-10 minutes, the rotating stopped and the object instead started bobbing several times between a horizontal and a vertical position.

The son now tried to look at the object through a pair of small handheld binoculars. Through the binoculars, he thought that he could see a string hanging from the bottom of the object.

The bobbing movement did not last long, and the object was horizontal again. After this it seemed as if it was starting to move away from the observers, while at the same time, from their point of view, it seemed to be getting closer to the horizon. In the end it disappeared behind a building.

From the moment the object started to move until it disappeared was only about five minutes. The total time of the sighting was about fifteen minutes. The sky was overcast that afternoon.

The video recording shows an oblong object, which is rotating and seems to be bobbing up and down. Unfortunately, no further details on the object are visible, and sometimes even the oblong shape can be difficult to see. On the other hand, it is possible to see both ground objects in the area and the appearance of the cloud cover in the recording. On the video, the weather seems to have been overcast at the time of the observation, and therefore the object must have been below the clouds.

SUFOI on the scene

Immediately after the observation, the radio mechanic called the SUFOI Alert Centre, and a report form was sent to the witnesses. The form was sent back very quickly along with a copy of the videotape.

Because of the special nature of the case, SUFOI also visited the witnesses. The SUFOI investigators were Casper Kai Lech (CKL) and Toke Haunstrup (TH). Unfortunately, only the mother participated in the interview, which carried out at the end of August 1996. The son's interpretation only exists in the form of the sighting report that he filled out just after the observation.

The investigation

Based on the sighting report, the interview and the recording, we concluded that either a balloon or an airship was the most likely explanation for the sighting. CKL therefore contacted a number of private balloon clubs and balloon and airship keepers. None of these could confirm that at the

time there had been airships or balloons in the air in the Albertslund area.

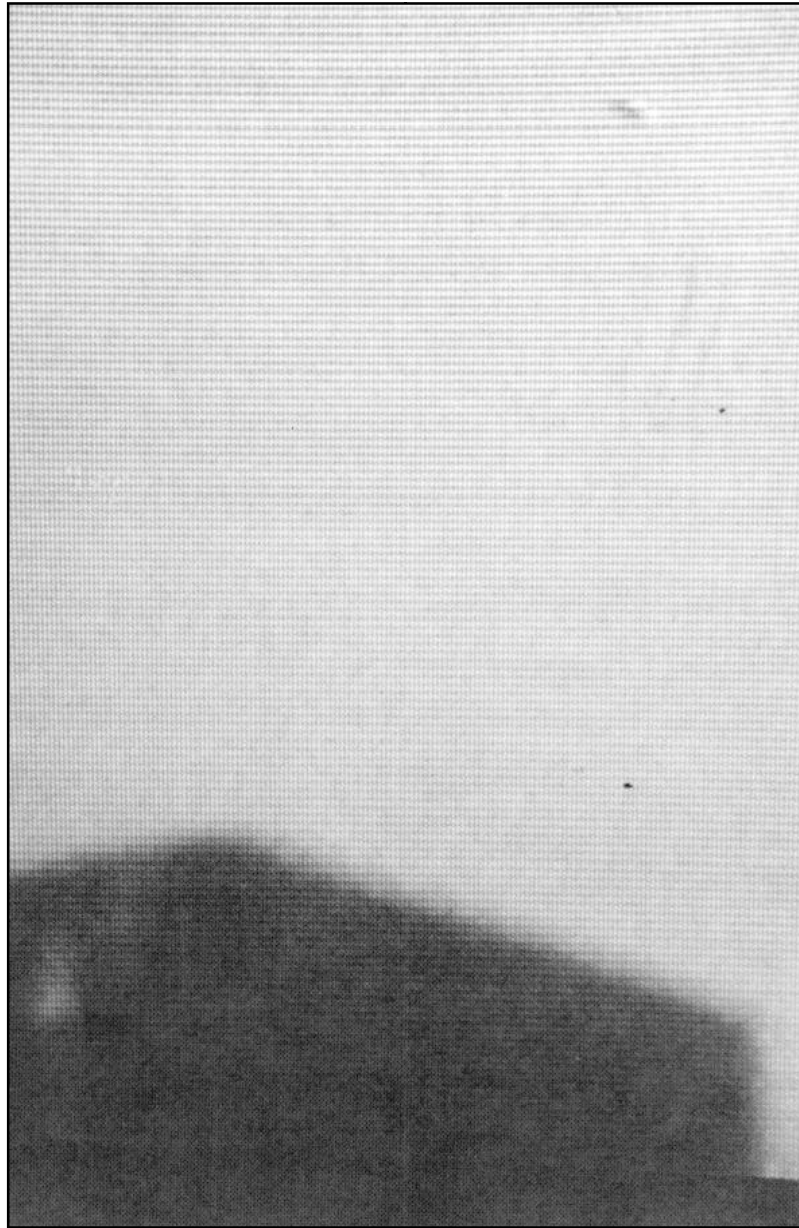
Denmark's Meteorological Institute (DMI) was contacted for information about the weather on the day in question. Based on these data, it might be possible to decide whether the movement of the object could be caused by the wind. The DMI answered the enquiry by sending weather observations from Roskilde and Kastrup airport and flight station Værløse.

The weather data tell us that between 14:00 and 17:00 on the day of the sighting there was a light breeze (the speed was 2 - 3 meters per second) from various directions (for example, at 17:00 DST the wind direction was recorded as westerly in Roskilde, easterly in Kastrup and easterly in Værløse). In other words, it is very difficult to say anything specific about the weather on that day. The weather observations do not help shed light on the probability of the object being a balloon or an airship; they only show that the wind was very changeable.

In addition, the DMI stated that the altitude of the lowest clouds could not have been more than 1,500 meters. As we also know the angle of elevation above the horizon and know that the object was below the clouds, the distance to the object cannot have been more than about six kilometres.

Balloon?

We suspected that the explanation could be an airship or a balloon, but we had no



Still photograph from the video recording in Albertslund, 8 July 1996. At the bottom of the picture can be seen the top of a post in the fence that separates the gardens. The object can faintly be seen over to the right above the post.

sources that could confirm this theory.

As a final attempt, we wanted to investigate whether it could have been a small balloon on a rope. Most people are familiar with this type of balloon, which one sometimes sees floating in the air attached to a cable.

At least two things in the case pointed towards such a balloon:

- The radio engineer stated that through his binoculars he could see some-

thing resembling a rope hanging from the end of the oblong object. This could be the cable holding the balloon.

- The rotating and bobbing movements are not consistent with a large airship or balloon. On the other hand, it is easy to imagine a small balloon on a cable moving in this manner.

The most significant objection to this theory is that the witnesses saw the object move down towards the hori-

Sightings

zon and disappear behind a house. They interpreted this as an indication that the object was flying directly away from them. A balloon anchored by a cable would obviously not be able to move away from where it had been placed. However, the explanation for this movement could be that the balloon was being pulled back down to the ground, which would make it seem to the witnesses that the object was moving away from them.

In order to verify this theory, we took a map and picked out the places in the area of the sighting where a balloon would be likely to be sited. We contacted several of these places - for example, a phone call to Nordvang School revealed that at the time in question they had been holding a sports day, where they had a balloon floating in the air above the school. This balloon, however, had only been floating very low above the rooftops. If it should be the correct explanation for the filmed object, according to the calculations it should have been at an altitude of around one kilometre. On these grounds alone, the balloon at Nordvang School can be ruled out.

Also located in the direction of the sighting is Glosstrup Sports Ground. However, the geometric calculations show that a balloon at the sports ground would have to be at an altitude of around 0.6 km, which is judged to be too high. At an altitude of more than 500 metres, the balloon would be a substantial nuisance to private aircraft (which often fly at low altitude), and a

balloon could hardly keep the weight of such a long cable aloft.

Perhaps the Forbrændingen arts centre at the Albertslund Shopping Centre would be more promising. The geometric calculations show that a balloon over this location would have been at an altitude of 150 metres above the ground. This is still a lot, but does sound a great deal more realistic than what the previous calculations showed. It must be added that there is obviously some uncertainty over the mother's judgement of the angle of elevation. However, the angle could not have been less than about 10 degrees, as the block of houses the object was situated over obscured the lowest part of the sky. The head of Forbrændingen denied, however, that they had had a balloon up at the beginning of July 1996.

Summing-up and conclusion

The investigation has not produced any clear results, and it has not been possible to point to an actual "launcher" of a balloon or an airship.

Several things indicate that a balloon (attached to a cable) is the explanation of the object. Supporting this theory are especially:

- The object's oblong appearance - both visible on the video recording and described by the witnesses.

- The fact that the son thought he could see a rope hanging down from the object.

- The object's movements (rotating and bobbing). This could be caused by a combination of light wind and an apparently changeable wind direction.

On the other hand, it seems more or less ruled out that the object could have been an airship, in that:

- The object's movements do not fit with the patterns of movement one would expect of a large airship (with passengers).

- A number of enquiries to balloon clubs and owners of airships all produced negative results - at the time of the observation, nobody had a balloon or an airship up over the Albertslund area.

We can therefore conclude that a balloon attached to a cable is a likely explanation. The fact that we have been unable to identify precisely the actual balloon in question does not necessarily weaken this theory, as one can imagine many people and organisations who might be interested in having such a balloon in the air. Car dealers, for example, use such balloons to draw attention to their businesses.

The video will now be passed on to SUFOI's photographic consultant Hans Bødker for further analysis.

Postscript

This case resulted in quite a bit of media publicity in the summer of 1997. On 27 May, two news programmes on the television station TV2

showed an item with pictures from the video and an interview with SUFOI chairman Per Andersen.

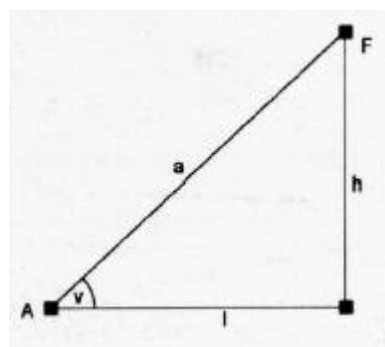
This publicity led to a group of young people from Copenhagen getting in touch with TV2 to report that during the summer they had sent up a balloon, which they thought was the explanation for the video recording. TV2 News transmitted this story on 13 July.

Unfortunately, TV2 News (and the young lads) had forgotten to check the date of the sighting: the balloon had been launched in August 1996, while the sighting in Albertslund took place on 8 July - about a month before their balloon launch. Therefore, it could not have been this balloon that led to the sighting.



Calculation of distance and altitude

Using simple geometric calculations, it is possible to calculate the distance, size and altitude of aerial phenomena. The figure below illustrates how one can set up a right-angled triangle with sides of lengths h , a and l and the angle v , when the observer is located at point A and the object at point F.



In this figure, h represents the object's altitude above the ground, a is the distance between the observer and the object and l corresponds to the distance be-

tween the observer and the point on the ground directly beneath the object (in other words, the distance l is measured along the ground). If just two of the four parameters (h , a , l and v) are known, the others can be calculated.

Maximum distance to the object

According to the DMI's information, the cloud cover was at an altitude of no more than 1,500 metres. Using a protractor, the mother measured the object's angle of elevation over the horizon to be around 14 degrees. Therefore, given $v = 14$ degrees and $h = 1,500$ metres, we get the following result: $l = 6.0$ km and $a = 6.2$ km.

Balloon at Nordvang School, Glostrup

Nordvang School is about 4,1 km from the Elephant's

Quarter (i.e. $l = 4.1$ km). As we also know the object's angle of elevation ($v = 14$ degrees), we can work out its altitude: $h = 1,0$ km.

Balloon at Glostrup Sports Ground

Glostrup Sports Ground is about 2,2 km from the Elephant's Quarter (i.e. $l = 2.2$ km). With an angle of elevation of $v = 14$ degrees, the object's height above the ground comes to $h = 0.6$ km.

Balloon at Forbrændingen, Albertslund Shopping

Centre Forbrændingen is about 0.6 km from the Elephant's Quarter (i.e. $l = 0.6$ km). With an angle of elevation of $v = 14$ degrees, the object's height above the ground comes to about 150 metres.

Classic saucer photograph

By Kim
Møller
Hansen



Black and white print of the original colour slide taken on 26 July 1975 by three Dutch tourists on a walk in Zwischenbergen in Switzerland. The picture can be found in colour in the book Unidentified Aerial Object photographed near Zwischenbergen, Switzerland, on July 26 1976 - A Case Analysis.

In April 1977 the “First International UFO Conference” was held in Acapulco, Mexico. At the conference photographic expert William H. Spaulding presented a colour picture that, according to thorough computer analysis, with great certainty showed a genuine UFO photographed in southern Switzerland. Since then the picture, known as the Saas Fee UFO, has been included in many TV programmes, books and lectures.



Spaulding's computer analysis of the picture showed that the UFO was not a model hung from a string or thrown into the air. The object has a diameter of 8-10 metres and is about 150-200 metres away from the photographer.

The picture was taken around 15:00 on 26 July

1975 in Zwischenbergen, 15 km north-east from the famous ski resort Saas Fee in southern Switzerland. Three Dutch tourists were on a summer holiday in the area, and during a walk in the mountains they took a colour slide of a large unidentified object.

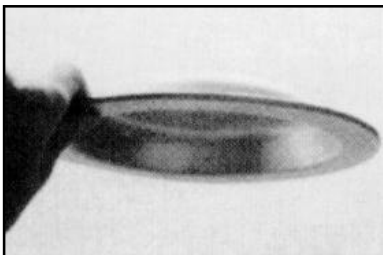
The mystery deepened when, a few years later, the Saas Fee picture was made public in the splendid German UFO picture book »Das Geheimnis der Unbekannten Flugobjekte«. The book was translated into several languages, after which other reports appeared. They

seemed to confirm that something strange had taken place in Swiss airspace in 1975. For example, a group of Belgian tourists captured a mysterious object on their holiday film. The object was photographed in Eison, 49 km west of Zwischenbergen - just five minutes after the Dutch group took their famous picture.

In 1994 the Saas Fee picture's wide distribution and renown provoked the two Belgian ufologists, Wim van Utrecht and Frits van der Veldt, to collect all the available material on the photograph and go through it critically. The result is a book with the long title »Unidentified Aerial Object photographed near Zwischenbergen, Switzerland, on July 26 1976 - A Case Analysis«.

The book is a splendid example of good investigation, and one can only hope that many ufologists will find inspiration in the book and re-examine similar classic photographs.

The book's authors have been extremely thorough and obtained all the available material on the case. There are over 80 photographs, illustrations and maps, transcripts of inter-



This is probably the same type of dish that the Dutch tourists used for their hoax photograph.

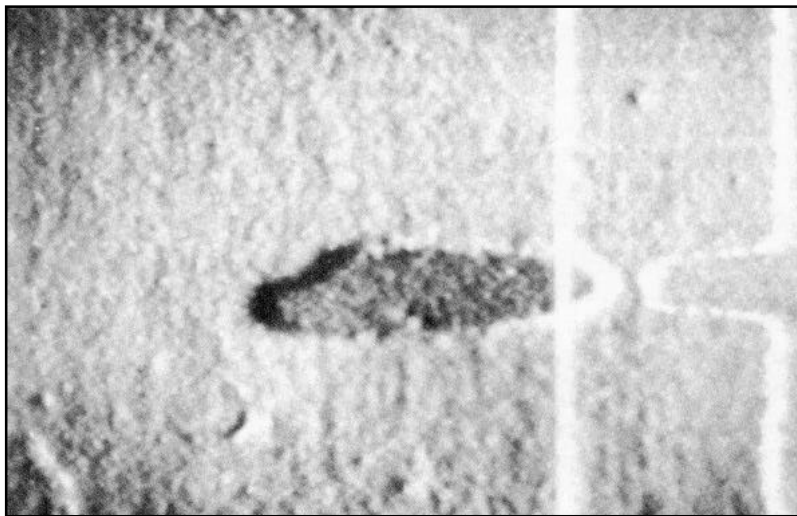


views with the witnesses, astronomical and meteorological data, descriptions and photographs of the location of the sighting, experiments carried out with a model of the object as well as detailed photographic

analyses. Naturally the book also comes equipped with detailed indexes, source references and various appendices.

The authors' conclusion will certainly be discouraging to many people: that the

This picture shows one of many control exposures of an aluminium dish hanging from a string. The dish has a diameter of 24 cm and is located 7 metres from the camera.



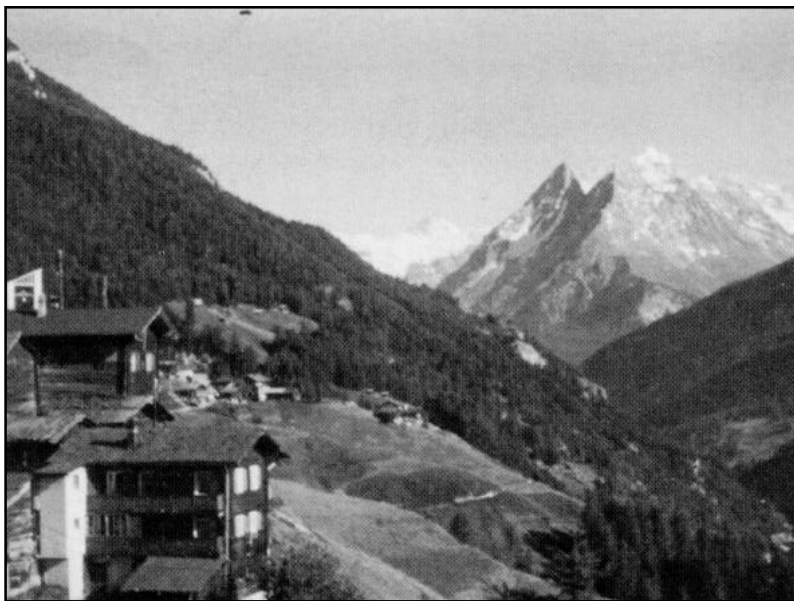
Two of GSW's computer images of the Saas Fee object. Unfortunately GSW's analysis is based on poor prints, so their conclusions are very unreliable.

*How the
sighting
location
looked in
1989.*



picture shows not a UFO but an aluminium dish from a camping set!

In the book the authors present many convincing arguments for the hoax theory:



This photograph shows an object at the top of the picture. The picture was supposedly taken in Eison a few minutes after the Dutch tourists took their famous picture. Investigations later revealed that nothing unusual was seen while the photograph was being taken. Only when the Saas Fee photograph became famous did some Belgian tourists remember that they had also been in the area and taken some pictures. Perhaps there was something interesting in some of the photographs? They went through the old holiday album with a fine-toothed comb - and indeed there was something strange in one of the pictures. Where and when the photograph was actually taken is not known. SUFOI's photographic consultant Hans Bødker has examined the Eison picture. He believes along with several other people that the object is either a bird or quite simply a fault on the film caused by a speck of dust.

1) The authors conducted a large number of tests. They photographed an aluminium dish under various conditions. The dish was photographed after it had been thrown into the air like a Frisbee and also while it was hanging from both a horizontal and vertical string. The object in the test photographs is practically indistinguishable from the Saas Fee object.

2) The meteorological data for the day in question does not fit what can be seen in the Saas Fee picture.

3) The photographer unfortunately only took one picture of the object, despite the fact that the object reportedly stood still for over a minute. During an interview with the photographer, it was also revealed that in the holiday album containing the other photographs from the same film, three pictures taken just before the UFO picture were missing, as was the subsequent picture. Allegedly they had completely failed to come out. Perhaps they had been thrown away because they revealed how the hoax had been set up.

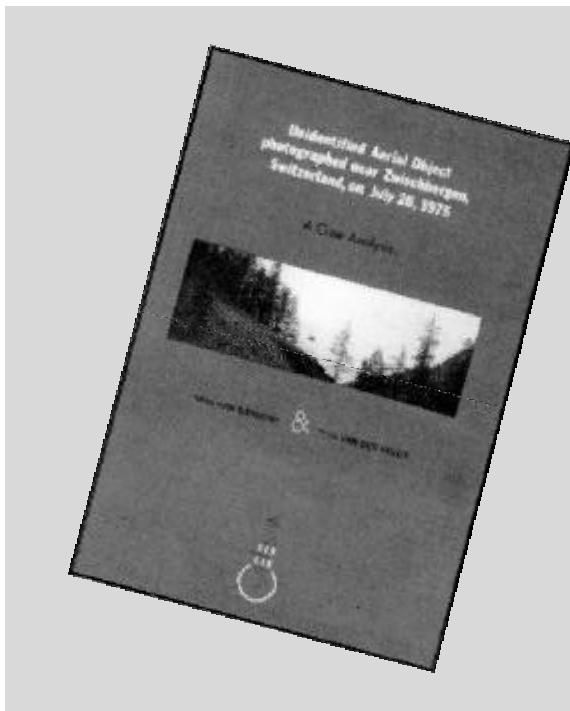
What about the computer analyses? In the period 1976-1993 the Saas Fee picture has been analysed several times. All the analyses show that the object is three-dimensional and exclude any tampering with the film itself. On the other hand the analyses disagree on the object's actual size and its distance from the camera. Dr. Wim van den Berg (NOBOVO) and William H.

Spaulding (Ground Saucer Watch) believe the report from the witnesses and think that the object is at least 5 metres in diameter and hovering above the ground at least 150 metres from the camera. Spaulding's conclusion is based on a detailed computer analysis of the picture, which is unfortunately not the original photograph, but a third- or fourth-generation copy!

The three other analyses, carried out by Hans van Kampen (NUSC), Herman van Regenmortel (Agfa-Gevaert) and Jan Prast respectively, are based on the original colour slide. They all agree that the object is close to the camera and very small, and therefore must be a model of some sort.

The actual distance between the camera and the object and the object's exact

position in the landscape are still unknown. However that is the next thing Wim van Utrecht and Frits van der Veldt want to find an answer to. The case will be explored right to the bottom, even though everything already indicates that the Saas Fee picture should be removed from the list of genuine UFO photographs.



Wim van Utrecht & Frits van der Veldt: *Unidentified Aerial Object photographed near Zwischenbergen, Switzerland, on July 26, 1975 - A Case Analysis*, Caelestia 1994. 240 pages, richly illustrated.

ISBN 90-802220-1-1

The book can be ordered by sending DM 40 or £15 to:

Wim van Utrecht
Kronenburgstraat 110
B-2000 Antwerpen
Belgium

Great Interest in UFO Lectures

On 27 May 1997, SUFOI held an evening of lectures in the Lindersvold community centre in Vanløse. More than 70 people accepted the invitation and came to hear a series of exciting lectures, starting with a review of the entire Roswell case.

After this the vice-president of SUFOI, Toke Haunstrup, reported on a series of current Danish video record-

ings of unknown phenomena.

After a short break, a discussion was started on whether it is a certain type of person that sees UFOs.

Finally Curt Frandsen, who himself has had a very exciting UFO experience, gave a lecture. The participants were very interested in Curt's account, and it made a great finale to an

interesting and challenging night in Vanløse.



Words and
picture:
Kim Møller
Hansen

Comets still portents of doom

By Ole Henningsen



Comet seen in 1456.
SUFOI Picture Library

Old engraving of a comet which, like a "sword of flame", appeared in the sky in 1528. The comet was taken to be a bad omen, and plague broke out shortly after the comet had disappeared from the sky.

For centuries, comets have foretold disaster. Today, it might be imagined that we had got over that type of superstition, but sadly, the events of the past few months have confirmed that the appearance of comets in the sky continues to appeal to fantasists the world over.



Since the dawn of time, the appearance of comets in the sky has been a bad omen for humanity. This is clearly evident from the many reports and old drawings and engravings stored in archives and libraries around the world. And of course, "comet pills" were being manu-



factured and sold on a grand scale as recently as 1910, when the famous Halley's comet paid a visit.

Halley's comet

One may, perhaps, be naïve enough to think that such

nonsense was outdated, but no. It was not so bad when Halley's comet came by again in 1986. The comet's return to this part of the Solar System had of course received wide media coverage, and a large amount of literature was published. It was



The comet Hale-Bopp photographed on 31 March 1997, 50 mm, f2, 12 min. exposure. Both the comet's large tail and the weaker ion trail can be seen clearly in the picture. The tail (slanting to the right) consists mainly of dust particles, which are illuminated by the sun. The ion trail (almost vertical to the comet) consists of charged particles that are pushed away from the core by particle radiation from the sun.

Photograph: Mogens Zachariasen



even visited by several probes, which unlocked many of its secrets.

However, it may not have quite fully lived up to expectations as far as its appearance in the sky was concerned. It was not easy to see if you were not completely certain where to look and had binoculars to help.

Hale-Bopp did not disappoint

It is something quite different with the latest well-known comet, Hale-Bopp, which almost nobody could avoid noticing in the north-

ern sky between March and April 1997.

Since its discovery, astronomers all over the world

had placed great expectations upon it. With the data released on its size, brightness and so on, there was a great likelihood of it being the comet of the century. It did not disappoint the predictions, appearing with its great brightness and striking tail as a most spectacular sight in the dark northern sky.

Regardless of the wide media coverage and easily accessible scientific information, homespun opinions about the comet turned up in great number.

The comet is dangerous

Yes, this actually appeared in the Danish tabloid newspaper BT on 8 March 1997, in a reader's letter written by Marianne Rasmussen of Odense. Of course, she would have been correct, if the comet had considered crashing down on our heads, but that was hardly the case.

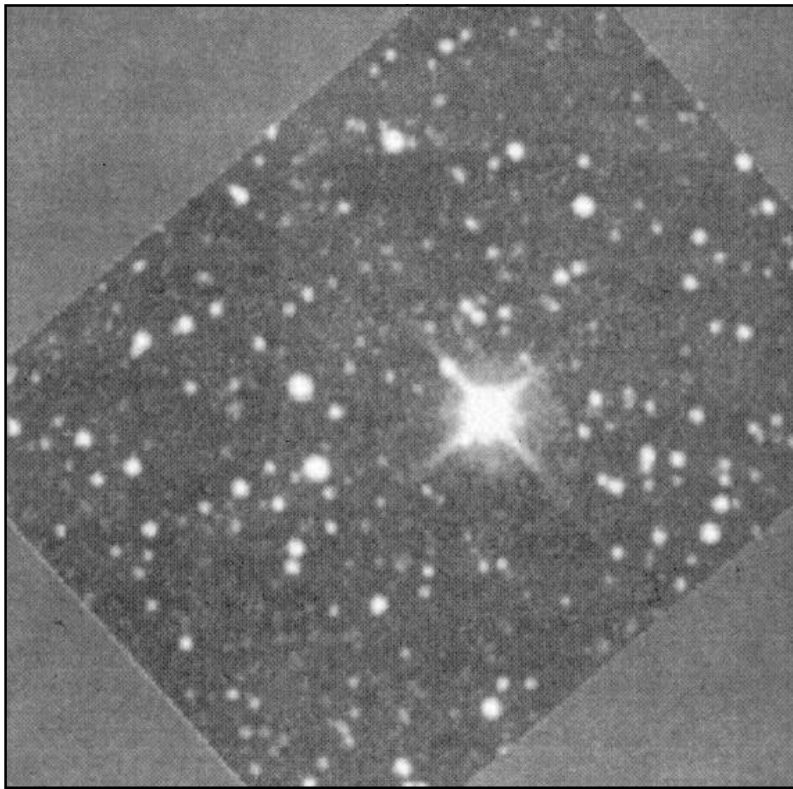
Marianne Rasmussen wrote about comets that, amongst other things:

"The closer they come to Earth, the more natural disasters occur. Try to think of



In Chuck Shramek's photograph of comet Hale-Bopp from 14 November 1996, the "Saturn-like object" can be seen to the right above the comet.

*The star
SAO
141894,
which was
the cause of
the "Saturn-
like object"
next to
Hale-Bopp,
can be seen
clearly on
this star
chart.*



how many have occurred over the last 14 days. That cannot be a coincidence. Illnesses and disabilities are becoming more widespread. The number of obituaries in the daily newspapers is increasing. There is more violence and more car accidents.

"A great amount of static electricity is being generated in the air. It irritates the mucous membrane, many have a high fever. I have a good tip for that, drink lots of water, it will relieve the body's energy system, so it can function better and keep the brain clear."

Of course, doctors have been advocating for years that we should generally drink more water, but that this should help against comets seems to be a new discovery that should go down in history. Judging from this reader's letter, one can only recommend Marianne Rasmussen to drink even greater quantities of

water. According to her, that should keep her brain clear!

Hale-Bopp on the Internet

The comet was also a spectacular sight in many homes, where with a computer you could surf around the Internet all day long, studying at your leisure the many web sites with professional pictures and amateur snaps of comet Hale-Bopp in both black and white and colour.

The American astronomical publication *Sky & Telescope* wrote in its April 1997 edition that if you searched the Internet with one of the prevalent search engines, you would get a list of no less than 5,000 hits that referred in one way or another to Hale-Bopp.

Saturn-shaped object behind Hale-Bopp?

An American amateur astronomer attracted atten-

tion in the autumn of 1996 with a rather curious explanation of a photograph of comet Hale-Bopp. On 14 November, Chuck Shramek from Houston, Texas photographed the comet with a CCD camera, an electronic camera used by astronomers.

In the picture of the comet, Shramek could also see a shining object, which seemed to resemble the planet Saturn. Shramek checked his electronic star chart and found to his surprise that there was no star at the relevant position. He therefore leapt to the conclusion that he had discovered a new object in the sky, and immediately proclaimed this epoch-making discovery in a nation-wide radio programme hosted by the famous radio broadcaster Art Bell. Art Bell has his own web site on the Internet, and in his radio show often deals with various types of mysteries such as ghosts, UFOs and crop circles.

Saturn-shaped object was a star

At the same time, Chuck Shramek posted the picture and his story on his web site, so the report received maximum coverage. It only took the experts a few days to discover that Chuck Shramek had made a basic mistake. True, he could not find a star at that point in the sky on his electronic star chart *Mega Star*, but that was because of an error in the program settings. If he had changed the parameters, the star would have appeared on the screen.



The Aztecs called the comets smoking stars and believed that, amongst other things, they could foretell disaster. In this 16th century drawing, the Aztec leader Montezuma is being warned of impending danger, shortly before Hernan Cortés' arrival in 1519.

SUFOI
Picture
Library

Furthermore, on other star chart programs with the correct set-up, it was easy to see that this was an ordinary star of luminosity 8.5 with the designation SAO 141894, a star that cannot be seen with the naked eye.

That the star in Chuck Shramek's photograph is equipped with "shining rays" is quite normal with certain types of astronomical exposure. This has been recognised for decades and can be seen in masses of star photographs in general astronomical material.

Global cover-up?

Chuck Shramek was quickly followed by several others, who came forward with more or less absurd claims about "the giant spacecraft" that, to judge from the picture, was very clearly following the comet on its journey through space.

A brief surf on the Internet will reveal a wealth of commentary and reports on NASA's concealment of the best comet photographs, as well as professional astronomers' comet photographs, that swindlers have altered and posted on the Internet as proof of their outrageous spacecraft claims, and so on.

Even the Vatican does not escape. By all accounts, they fear an invasion from space and consequently have entered into a secret (?) alliance with NASA and the American government.

Many of these reports could be seen on Art Bell's and Whitley Streiber's (known from UFO abduction cases) web sites. Every conspiracy theory imaginable has appeared in the comet's wake. Of course, if anyone feebly attempts to point out any otherwise obvious facts, then naturally they are also part of the great conspiracy.

However, it is probably better to be accused of being part of a conspiracy than to participate in a campaign of ignorance.

Suicide in the wake of the comet

The hysteria culminated tragically enough with the discovery of 39 Americans, who had committed collective suicide near San Diego in California. They were all members of the sect "Heaven's Gate", led by Marshall Herff Applewhite. According to an article by Bent Albrechtsen in the Danish newspaper Politiken on 29 March 1997, Applewhite had announced on the sect's Internet web site that the appearance of Haley-Bopp was "the sign we have been waiting for, the time of the arrival of the spacecraft from the Evolutionary Level Above Human to take us home to 'their

world' in the real Kingdom of Heaven."

In another of the messages published, it was said that "our Heavenly Father has helped us to recognise that so-called flying saucers, erroneously called UFOs, are the Heavenly Kingdom's method of transport and laboratories (clouds of light, wheels of fire), and that most of the visitors in these spacecraft are members of the true Kingdom of Heaven".

How regrettable that such a beautiful aerial phenomenon could contribute to sect leaders shrouding their

followers in their own spiritual darkness.

Secondly, how annoying that such wild claims and reactions could, for a while, overcloud the more serious attempts around the world to research and explain UFO sightings.

Alan Hale's comments

One of the discoverers of the comet, Alan Hale, examined Chuck Shramek's picture and description immediately after their release in 1996, concluding that the "Saturn-like object" was an ordinary star.

In his comments at www.hale-bopp.com, Hale expressed his annoyance that there are still people who connect the appearance of comets in the sky with the end of the world. He was, sadly, convinced that stories such as Shramek's would increase in number as the comet became more noticeable through the spring of 1997. Rather than concern ourselves with these, in his opinion we should just enjoy the beautiful sight in the sky while we had the chance.

Conference on light pollution

By Per Andersen



On 15 January 1997, a number of organisers jointly convened a conference on light pollution. The conference in the Tycho Brahe planetarium was generally a disappointment for amateur astronomers, while SUFOI can be very satisfied with a promise to ban the use of searchlights in the sky. Around one third of all the calls to SUFOI's Alert Centre turn out to involve searchlights, so we pay a great deal of attention to this subject.

Light is good! This positive perception of light lies deep within all of us, built up over thousands of years from the time when humans first lit fires and could drive the darkness back.

The perception runs through all facets of our language. We talk about "enlightenment", "a bright spark", "a shining example", "the light of experience" and so on. Conversely, we talk about "the forces of darkness", and "a dark nature". Plainly, then, light is good and dark is bad.

Or is it? There are many misunderstood features about light. For example, the idea that the more light you have when it is dark, the safer you should be - whereupon many people put up powerful spotlights around their house. Wrong! The more light there is, the less we see, because the eyes' pupils contract. A potential attacker would find it much easier to hide himself in the pronounced shadows that too much light creates.

The chairman of a parish church council explained that

he thought it was totally natural to have lights on the local church in the evening and at night. He had not realised that the light was contributing to "light smog" at night, that the church's architecture was not designed to be lit from below (many buildings appear "deformed" when lit in this manner), and that it was a total waste of energy, as what benefit do people get from the church being lit at night? After some discussion, he suddenly "saw the light" (yes, sorry), and would

take the subject up with the church council.

What can be done?

SUFOI took an active part in the conference on light pollution on 15 January, arranged jointly by the Astronomical Society, the Danish Nature Conservancy Board and the National Association for the Conservation of Buildings and Landscapes. One of the aims of the conference was to initiate a debate about the general use of outdoor lights.

The morning's open programme attracted an audience of around 150, and the National Association introduced the day by drawing attention to the three means available for changing the way lights are used: (a) better guidance to people such as electricians, (b) enforcement of existing legislation and (c) new regulations or laws.

In the subsequent lecture on the use of lights, an incredible amount of emphasis was placed on street lighting, advertisements and shop fronts, but looking at light pollution as a whole these are certainly the worst offenders.

The problems posed by light pollution can be roughly divided up into three categories:

- **Waste of energy:** As a lot of light is directed straight up in the air (street lighting, shop fronts lit from below, and so on), a lot of light is wasted.

- **Aesthetic considerations:** Having many different neon advertisements in one place can result in confusing and "ugly" urban landscapes. You could call it "light chaos". In general, it

is a question of what sort of advertisements we are willing to accept; searchlights in the sky, for example.

- **Nuisance (pollution):** There may be cases of intrusive lights (lights from public places that shine into bedrooms at night), dazzling (e.g. bright streetlights) or light smog (which is a nuisance to astronomers and perhaps animal life).

Existing legislation too weak

The head of the Forestry and Nature Agency, Henrik

Knudth-Winterfeldt, was a key person throughout the entire conference, as he was representing the Environment Ministry. He spoke about the legislation in this area - or rather the lack of it.

The most important laws are the environment legislation (Protection of Nature law) and building legislation. The former is relevant to searchlights, in that it prohibits highly visible advertisements in the open countryside. This is not particularly helpful, as searchlights are mostly used in



In May 1995 the 50 years anniversary of the end of World War II was celebrated on the west coast of Jutland with an intense laser beam.

Photo:
Politiken May
16th, 1997

towns and not always for advertising purposes. However, the Forestry and Nature Agency had considered taking a couple of test cases to court.

In addition, Knudth-Winterfeldt thought that mood at the Ministry was against more legislation, and that other ways to limit light pollution should first be sought.

In the afternoon, there was a closed meeting with a panel debate, to which SUFOI was also invited. The debate was attended by around 50 people; mainly non-governmental organisations opposed to light pollution as well as public representatives from the weather directorate, gas and electricity boards and so on. Apart from a couple of people from the Danish Neon Advertising Producers organisation, there was a marked lack of representatives from the light-using sectors. In particular, there were no representatives from any companies that use or hire out searchlights.

Information or regulation?

Concerning commercial lighting and outdoor lighting in general, the feeling was that primarily one should educate people, in order to give consumers (as well as electricians) a better knowledge and understanding of light pollution.

But can all the problems be solved in this manner? I don't think so! I am not usually in favour of totally banning something, but in some situations it is necessary.

In this context, it is ap-

palling that the existing environmental legislation covers all forms of pollution, such as noise, for example, while light in particular is not covered by the law at all.

I am convinced of the need for a ban on searchlights and a total prohibition on the use of our sky as advertising space. Peter Hee, from the Local Authorities Technical Managers Association, declared during the panel debate that the regulation of commercial lighting might as well be abandoned, because it is impossible to control. What nonsense!

The use of searchlights is determined and carried out by a very small circle of people, who all have a direct economic interest in being able to send thousands of watts up into the sky. It is companies that hire out such equipment, and one can hardly expect companies that earn a living from hiring out searchlights to be interested in any restrictions or "education".

Seen over several hundred square kilometres

Meanwhile, more and more absurd examples of the use of searchlights are appearing. One week in September 1996, the shopping centre in Næstved had 3 x 4,000 watts running around in the sky. These especially powerful lights were visible from Slagelse, Sørbymagle, Rønnede, Sorø, Køge and other areas; a distance of at least 30 km from Næstved, or an area of 300 square km! The manager of the centre commented on the case with

the statement, "Even in the dark you should be able to find the shopping centre"!

A worse example is from Ringsted on 28 December 1996, when there were powerful searchlights in the sky for several hours. They could be seen from Hvalsø, Borup, Bjæverskov, Viby S, Rønnede, Haslev, Regstrup and St. Merløse. That is a distance of at least 25 km from Ringsted, or an area of 250 square km. One is speechless upon hearing the reason: that evening, the owner of the searchlight-hire company Disco Electronics was celebrating a friend's 30th birthday by setting up searchlights at three locations in Næstved!

We can therefore only be pleased that the most tangible result of the conference was in exactly the area of searchlights. Henrik Knudth-Winterfeldt from the Forestry and Nature Agency promised that an initiative would be taken to introduce a law on searchlights. He even said it was urgent, as the use of searchlights is currently exploding. In their terminology, "urgent" probably means within the next couple of years.

SUFOI will definitely follow the matter up and make sure that the Forestry and Nature Agency keep their promise for legislation in this area. We will do this through the documentation of the use of searchlights in Denmark. With our Alert Centre and investigators, SUFOI has a unique possibility for recording and documenting the use of searchlights.

Are the Danish Familiar with Aerial Phenomena?

In the spring of 1997, SUFOI carried out a survey among 100 randomly selected Danes. We wanted to find out something about the Danes' knowledge of natural aerial phenomena. The answers were very surprising!

By Per Andersen



On 22 September 1996, SUFOI's board defined some totally new aims for the organisation's activities. These aims are:

- to identify and demystify all observed aerial phenomena
- to engender familiarity with the sky so that everyone is able to recognise all known phenomena
- to ensure that all observers of unknown aerial phenomena report their sightings to SUFOI
- to be the organisation that people contact to obtain information about UFOs.

The new aims did not significantly alter SUFOI's basic activities, but added some new dimensions to them, including increasing awareness of known aerial phenomena. Consequently, SUFOI also decided to take measurements of these new goals by means of a survey. The purpose of the analysis was to measure the popula-

What phenomena do the respondents claim to have witnessed?

Phenomenon	Percentage
Star	100
Meteor	86
Comet	80
Milky Way	77
Searchlight	72
Northern lights	54
Planet	53
Satellite	38
Galaxy	20
Ball lightning	17
Pluto	12
Jupiter's moons	6

tion's knowledge of known aerial phenomena.

Have you seen Pluto in the sky?

The greatest surprise in the investigation was certainly the Dane's poor knowledge of aerial phenomena. While almost everyone

claimed to have seen stars, meteors or shooting stars, the Milky Way and comets in the sky (the survey was carried out just after the wide coverage of Hale-Bopp in the media), there were other surprising results:

Only 38 pct. of the population claimed to have seen a satellite in the sky. This

was somewhat lower than expected.

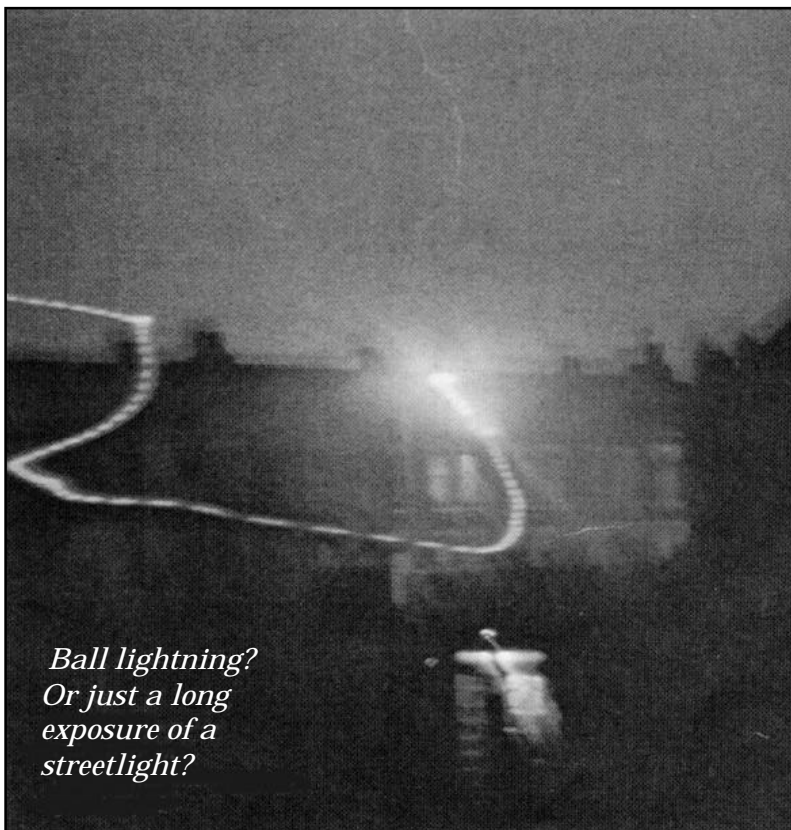
Conversely, 72 pct.% answered "yes" to having seen a searchlight in the sky. Yet more confirmation of the great increase in this phenomenon recently - and thereby another argument for legislation in this area. The greatest number of witnesses of searchlights is found in Copenhagen, where the percentage lies at 88 pct., followed by Funen.

There were the more incomprehensible answers, such as 17 pct. who claimed to have seen ball lightning, and 12 pct. who claimed to have seen Pluto in the sky. Both of these claims are highly excessive and, in the case of Pluto, complete fabrication, as Pluto cannot be seen with the naked eye. This is evidently caused by people being afraid to admit that there is something they haven't seen ("should I have done?")

Moons are the size that they should be!

As well as general knowledge of various aerial phenomena, the survey contained seven questions of a more hair-splitting nature, which were meant as a test of the interviewees' particular knowledge of these phenomena. Although the questions were hair-splitting, one should be surprised by the number of wrong answers, shown in the table below.

The top scorer was the question, "Is the moon larger when it is low on the horizon?" A huge 68 pct. said "yes", even though this is wrong. More than half



*Ball lightning?
Or just a long
exposure of a
streetlight?*

Test of knowledge of aerial phenomena with the wrong answer in parentheses. The percentages show the proportion of wrong answers.

Question	(wrong answer)	Percentage
Does a comet move quickly through the sky?	(yes)	39
Can the noise from an aircraft always be heard?	(yes)	19
Can a satellite stand still in the sky?	(yes)	39
Is the moon larger when low on the horizon?	(yes)	68
Can the northern lights be seen in Denmark?	(no)	25
Can a satellite change direction?	(yes)	51
Can light from an aircraft 30 km away be seen?	(no)	21

thought that a satellite can change direction (wrong). Thirty-nine percent thought that a comet moves quickly across the sky, and a similar number thought that a satellite can stand still. A quarter of the respondents thought that the Northern Lights cannot be seen from Denmark, and finally every fifth person thought that you can always hear the noise from an aircraft. All of these answers are wrong.

We should be especially surprised that, in the middle of the Hale-Bopp events, when 80 pct. claimed to have seen a comet themselves, 39 pct. of these observers said that a comet travels quickly across the sky. The number of incorrect answers was apparently not influenced by whether or not people had seen a comet themselves.

A more understandable connection is apparent with the question "Can the northern lights be seen in Denmark?" Here, the number of wrong answers is obviously lower with people who have seen the northern lights themselves. However, there are still 17 pct. of the people who have seen the northern

lights who think they are not visible in Denmark, but this 17 pct. of the group must presumably have seen them abroad.

Are men more stupid?

The number of errors is completely independent of several factors, for example age and education - the latter being rather surprising. Similarly, there are not more errors from people who believe in UFOs, or among people who have themselves seen a UFO. This is positive, in that their sightings cannot be particularly attributed to an incorrect perception of the seven questions used in this survey.

The greatest correlation is found by looking at the sex of the respondents. Here we find that, on average, men make far more mistakes than do women. It could be supposed that men feel under more pressure to be "knowledgeable" - they ought to know something like that - so they take more chances, with consequently more errors. Women, on the other hand, perhaps feel more freedom to answer "don't know" and

thereby avoid making so many mistakes.

Finally, from among the many answers we shall present one that, in its way, highlights the difficulty of evaluating witnesses' plausibility and ability to observe:

A male squadron leader and major (presumably re-



The laser strikes a thin layer of cloud, creating a circular light phenomenon in the sky.

The arrow points to a satellite in the night sky.

Satellites move slowly in a straight path through the sky.



tired) had no less than four wrong answers out of the

seven - he did, however, have the correct answer to the two questions dealing with aircraft. For example, he answered incorrectly on the questions on comets, shooting stars and the moon low on the horizon.

Conclusions

The investigation plainly shows that SUFOI has a clear raison d'être. Looking at the aim of engendering

familiarity with the sky, there is a long way to go before that goal can be reached. SUFOI has therefore already instigated projects to strengthen that part of our activities.

Celebration and renewal

*Words and pictures:
Kim Møller
Hansen*



Per Andersen (left) and Peter Nørgaard are busy with the auction, where there was heavy bidding for the various items.

On Saturday 4 October there was candlelight, a good atmosphere and a full house in the Lindersvold community centre in Vanløse. The occasion was SUFOI's 40th anniversary party.

SUFOI's chairman, Per Andersen, bade the many guests welcome, after which there was a crush for the well-stocked buffet.

The evening's speech was presented in a humorous manner by Peter Nørgaard, who later in the evening act-

ed as a good-humoured auctioneer, as may interesting and mysterious items - including earth and crop samples from Danish crop circles - were sold.

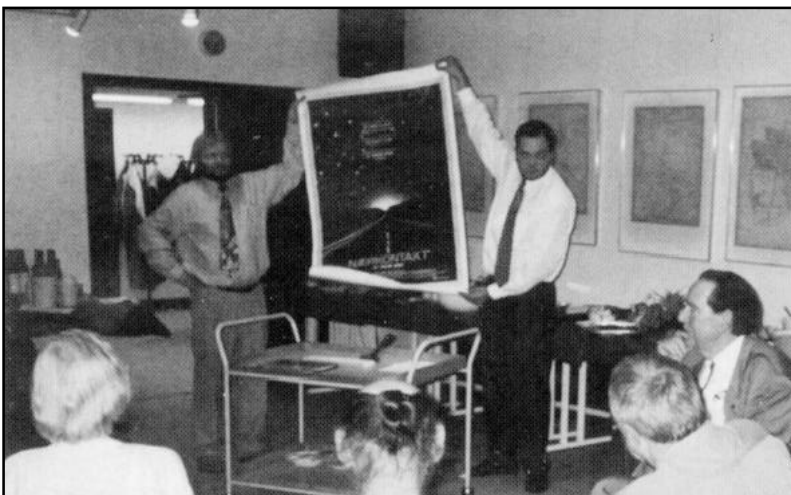
This enjoyable evening was rounded off in the best fashion with jazz music per-

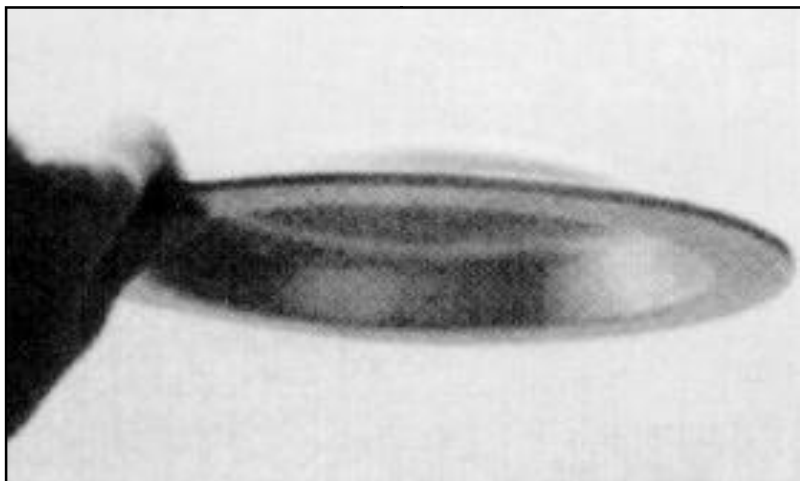
formed by Inge Andersen's Swingtet.

On the same day, SUFOI's board held its semi-annual meeting. The management, which looks after the organisation's daily affairs, was re-elected, consisting of Per Andersen (chairman) and the two vice-chairmen Peter Nørgaard and Toke Haunstrup.

Although the organisation's resources are relatively limited, there is a high level of activity, and ideas flourish. Current and future projects and initiatives were discussed at the meeting - not least the UFO Congress in Lyngby.

At the meeting, the board named two honorary SUFOI members: Per Borgaard and Finn W. Kalvik.





Per Borgaard is a journalist of long standing and has since SUFOI's infancy followed the organisation's work and the development of ufology at close quarters. In his many articles in the daily press, UFO-Nyt, UFO-Vision and others he has displayed a healthy scepticism from which many could learn a great deal.

At the organisation's anniversary party, Finn W. Kalvik was also celebrating his 25-year anniversary as a member of SUFOI's board - and now wished to step down and enjoy being a pensioner. Through all those years, Finn has been "our man in Norway", and it is thanks to his efforts that UFO-Nyt has always had so many Norwegian readers.

SUFOI's board also gained some new energy at the meeting on 5 October, as Casper Kai Lech from Charlottenlund and Michael Storm from Herlev were both elected to the board with responsibility for SUFOI's tape archive and book archive respectively. We bid both of them a hearty welcome and look forward to working with them.



Inge Andersen's Swingtet performed high-class jazz and won deserved applause.

Michael Storm, Herlev, new member of SUFOI's board and responsible for SUFOI's book archive.

Visit SUFOI's homepage at <http://www.sufoi.dk>

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